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## BOOK REVIEW

*La Crisis de la Pubertad y Sus Cosecuencias Pedagogicas.* By VICTOR MERCANTE. Buenos Aires, Cabaut y Cia, 1919. 437 p.

Senor Mercante's contribution to the psychology and pedagogy of pubescence, while particularly adapted to the educational problems of South America, contains a great deal of general information and offers suggestions of universal interest. His main thesis is that the age of puberty marks a crisis in the life of the individual and necessitates a school program adapted to its peculiar needs. Therefore he devotes his comprehensive volume to a study of the physiological and psychological traits which mark the onset of puberty, and to a detailed development of an educational plan based on this knowledge.

Chapter I, *The Crisis of Puberty*, approaches the problem from the broad biological viewpoint, and stresses the genetic interpretation of adolescent phenomena. There are a great many quotations from G. Stanley Hall and a number of French writers to substantiate the author's considerations, and two educational conclusions are drawn: 1. Education must not be contrary to evolution. 2. Whenever possible, education must favor evolution.

Chapter II is a very careful study of the organic changes during pubescence, and is a comprehensive summary of the literature on this subject, with additional data gathered in South American schools. There are numerous graphs and tables to show correlations and variations in height, weight, cephalic index, vital capacity, respiration rate, blood pressure, etc., at different ages of childhood and adolescence. The functional importance of all the glands of internal secretion in the production of the phenomena of puberty is emphasized, and the changes of voice at this period are noted. Especially noteworthy is the rather original statement that in the handwriting of the pupil the observant teacher has an excellent criterion for judging fluctuations in moods and peculiarities of temperament. The handwriting is considered to be a motor expression of the psychic state, and specimens are reproduced to show how it varies in the same student in childhood, pubescence, and late adolescence. The educational lesson to be drawn from the study of the physical nature of the pubescent child is the correct evaluation of games, sports, and physical training; and Senor Mercante enters a plea for the adoption of such exercises as tennis and especially football, which not only serve as an outlet for the over-abundant energies of youth, but have a great social and moral value as inculcating ideals of fair play and promoting the spirit of cooperation.

In the third chapter, a similar study of mental traits is made, focusing on sensation, perception, visual acuity, sensibility to pain, muscular sensibility, memory, attention, association, imagination, reasoning ability, etc. The important finding here is the indication that at this time in the life of the child the native tendencies make their first tentative appearance, so that this becomes a critical period for the discovery of vocational aptitudes. For this reason, as well as on account of the active nature of the pubescent boy and girl, which requires a constant motor outlet, courses in the secondary schools should include as much time in the laboratory and workshop as possible.

The fourth chapter, which is headed *The Sentiments and Conduct During the Crisis*, is a brief account of the sexual life in its relation to delinquency, vocational tendencies, and ecstatic experiences. One or two illustrations of adolescent love are cited, the danger of developing habits of self-abuse is touched upon, and the relatively high degree of sickness but low mortality prevalent among adolescents is mentioned.

Chapter V is an exposition of the necessity of an integral system of education at the pubescent period, which shall be as plastic as possible, and allow the child every opportunity for individual development. The cultural subjects are not to be discarded, but they are to be taught with a view to social, moral and aesthetic interpretations, while vocational training and physical education must assume a vital role in the curriculum. Chapter VI deals with the practical problems which are confronting the educators of South America in their attempts to reform the school system in accordance with these aims.

Chapter VII describes the ideal program for the secondary school, gives a plan of the correct type of building to be used, and outlines methods of teaching. Co-education is discussed, and meets with the author's approval because it foreshadows the social situation of adult life, but different curricula, adapted to sex differences, are insisted upon. The aim of education is defined as the development of the ability to meet the economic and social situations of life, and the building up of aesthetic appreciation and moral idealism.

Senor Mercante's work shows an extensive acquaintance with the literature of France and America on the subject of adolescent psychology and pedagogy, and a thorough comprehension of the work done by others along this line. But his chief contribution is his insistence upon an educational system adapted to the physical and mental needs of the pupils, and his appreciation of the aesthetic and idealistic functions of the school, as well as of its economic and social purposes.

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